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ABSTRACT

The history of Thomas Jefferson High School, Richmond (Virginia), is traced from its opening in 1930 through the city's social changes. The school developed a culture of academic excellence that it struggled to defend against decades of challenges such as desegregation, white flight, leadership changes, and budget cuts. The history of the school is a history of both stability and change, and it is instructive in that both before and after desegregation the school offered an education that could legitimately be called excellent. The school context has been characterized by special interest groups and political influence, and no decision regarding schooling in Richmond has been simple. Thomas Jefferson High School remained open despite three serious attempts to shut it down; its history illustrates the contemporary politics of education. The final chapter considers what the history of this school can teach about organizational survival. As it adapted to a changing student body, declining resources, and new educational priorities, the school retained its symbolic value through its commitment to academic excellence. (Contains 3 figures, 18 tables, and 102 references.) (SLD)

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